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Although convalescence usually follows rapidly after the termination of the disease by crisis, all danger is not then over, and recovery, especially in aged persons, must be promoted by a careful dietetic treatment. The diet at this time should be especially nourishing, and after the regulation three meals a day have been resumed it is well to give some light form of nourishment at regular intervals between meals.

A change of air is also considered beneficial, the chief points in selection of climate being mildness and absence of strong winds and dampness, especially during the winter months.

Rest during convalescence should be mental as well as physical, for if the attack has been severe, the nervous system has been subjected to more or less strain.

A VISIT TO A MEXICAN COTTON PLANTATION

BY BESSIE H. STEELE

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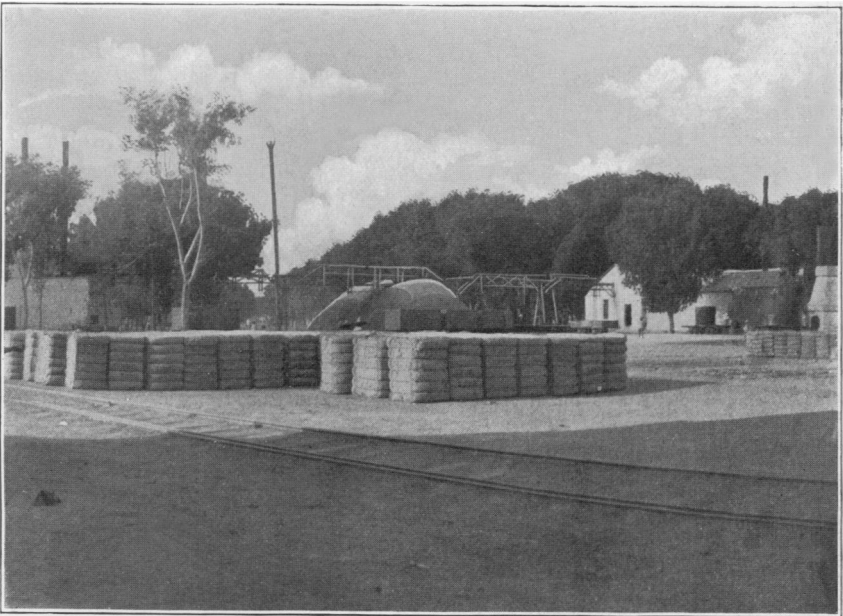
MY first visit to a cotton-field was made during a stay at New Orleans some years ago, but things are done on a scale so much larger on Mexican plantations that I was delighted when we received an invitation from Dr. Brodrick to become his guests and view the broad acres of the Tlahualilo Company in the State of Durango.

This ranch contains one hundred thousand acres, the greater part of which are under cultivation, and employs seven thousand Mexican laborers (peons), all of whom reside on the property with their families, forming villages around the ranch-houses, which are called in Spanish *haciendas*. Each *hacienda* (of which there are ten) has its own *administrador* and its own little village of *adobe* huts, which are occupied by the peons. In addition, there is the *administrador en general* and staff in Zaragoza, while the head offices, with the general manager, are located in Mexico City. The resident Americans include a doctor, a civil engineer, cotton sampler, etc., while all the clerical work is in charge of a Spaniard with Mexican assistants. There is also a native school-teacher and a Mexican *padre* (priest), who officiates at the little Catholic chapel and collects his fees from his parishioners.

We arrived at ranch head-quarters on a Friday night, and the next morning were taken by the doctor to the tramway, where an engine stood ready to make the rounds of all the fields, to collect the cotton-cars from the different *haciendas* to be brought to the gin at Tlahualilo,



ONE FIELD OF COTTON, CONTAINING 4,500 ACRES, TLAHUALILO, MEXICO



COTTON-GIN AT TLAHUALILO, MEXICO, BALES OF COTTON IN FOREGROUND



THE DOCTOR IN HIS DRUG-STORE, TLAHUALILO, MEXICO

where the cotton and cotton-seed are variously treated and prepared for shipment.

The day was a glorious one! A perfect arch of blue stretched above us unbroken by even the tiniest cloud; on the horizon those fantastic-shaped mountains so peculiar to Mexico lay sharply defined against the sky; the far-reaching fields of cotton—thousands of acres “white to the harvest”—were dotted with Mexican laborers; and over all streamed a flood of that incomparable Southern sunshine, its rays tempered by a gentle breeze and by the shade of alamo-trees, which lined the irrigation-ditches.

Water is money here, and each ranch-owner jealously guards his share. The Mexican government apportions the water and owns the main ditches, which are supplied from the Rio Nazas, a large river having its source in the Sierra Madre Mountains, and to whose waters the irrigation and cultivation of all this part of Northern Mexico is due. In fact, the prosperity of the whole Laguna District (which includes part of the States of Cohahuila and Durango) is dependent on the size of the cotton-crop.

Rain falls only during part of the year, from June to October, and during several months the river and ditches are quite dry. Near San Pedro, however, the moisture remains longer in the ground, and from a thorough wetting assures a crop for three years. It is a general saying here that “the average planter can make headway if he has one good crop every five years.”

On a rudely constructed but comfortable seat in front of the engine, having the place of honor between the civil engineer on one side and our host on the other, I felt safe and happy as we skirted the canals and bumped over the rather rickety-looking bridges spanning the irrigation-ditches, full of water to the very brim.

An impromptu bath would have been by no means pleasant, for the water was both deep and dirty, the latter condition owing probably to the *silt*, a deposit of mineral salts and decomposed vegetable matter brought down from the mountains by the Nazas River, and supplying the only fertilization necessary to the plantation.

As we journeyed along, here and there we met groups of peons returning from work, although it was yet scarcely noon. The Mexican laborer is inherently lazy and unambitious, and cannot understand why anyone should hurry or do any more work than he has to. His employer has found that only a certain amount of work can be gotten out of him in a day, and so allots to each his share. For this they receive from thirty-seven cents to fifty cents per day of Mexican money, which is equal to less than twenty cents of United States currency. If by dint of

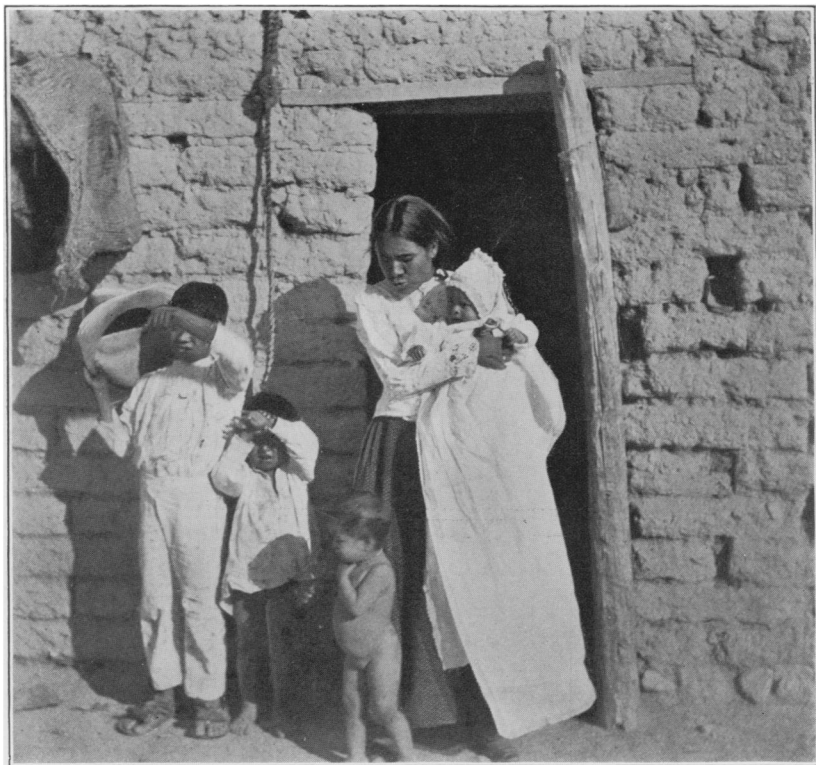
getting out a little earlier and idling over his work a little less he can get through sooner, he comes home singing, to smoke and lounge and gossip for the remainder of the day.

By nature indolent, he is also by nature improvident, and literally "takes no thought for the morrow." The wages received on Saturday night are usually gone by Monday morning, and possibly there is not a *tortilla* (Mexican cake) in the house, so that he must borrow food from a neighbor or get an advance on his next week's pay to keep his family from starving. He is, however, generous to a fault, and will lend to his neighbor as readily as he will borrow from him, is respectful to his employer and to all superiors, and is generally inclined to be humble and modest.

The Mexican peon is truly a Bohemian in every respect but one—he is not nomadic! It is, on the contrary, very difficult to induce him to leave his home to go to another part of the republic where labor is scarce and wages double what he is receiving. The wealthy ranchman has therefore resorted to the expedient of removing whole villages of the peasantry and providing quarters for them on his plantation. The *adobe* houses usually consist of one windowless room with a mud floor, on which you will find half a dozen partially clothed children squatting, for they live in a very filthy manner, the mortality among infants being as high as fifty per cent.

Dysentery is common among the natives and specific diseases extremely so, reaching as high as sixty-five per cent. Enteric fever is quite rare and is usually of a very mild type, probably owing to the complete absence of sewerage, so that the drinking-water is not contaminated by drains. We saw some Mexican women (with the inevitable *rebozo* draped over the head) drawing water in earthen jars from an excavation in the ground which formed a natural reservoir, and from which they get their supply of water the year around. When the alamo-trees shed their leaves (which they do in the very early *spring*, not in the *fall*) they drop into this pool, giving a brackish color and a bitter, acrid taste to the water.

The genial doctor related to us many interesting facts and amusing anecdotes about the Mexican peon. An ordinary dose of medicine, he found, would have no effect whatever on the patient. Twice or three times the dose that would be given to an average white man was necessary to treat his Mexican brother. Frequently a patient who left the doctor's office with an eight-ounce bottle of medicine, which should have lasted several days, would return next day with the empty bottle *for more*, apparently none the worse for his self-prescribed dose. It must have been taken on the principle that "a little being good, more is better."



A MEXICAN FAMILY AT PEDREZENA, MEXICO



"UN ANGELITO"—A BABY'S FUNERAL AS SEEN AMONG THE PEON CLASS



A PORTION OF THE MARKET-PLACE, TLAHUALILO, MEXICO



A PORTION OF THE MARKET-PLACE, TLAHUALILO, MEXICO

They are evidently of a stolid nature also in the matter of nerves, as the doctor had never found the usual symptoms of shock to follow either a major surgical operation or a severe accident.

After spending all day on the tramway, visiting several other *haciendas*, with an interval for luncheon and the inevitable *siesta*, our host conducted us through the gin, where the cotton is separated from the seed and packed in bales for shipment, and to the mill, where oil is extracted from the cotton-seed by intense heat and screw-pressure—one of the most interesting processes we ever watched!

Cotton-seed oil is used largely in lieu of olive oil, and is also utilized by the factories in the State for the manufacture of soap and glycerin. The residue of seed, which is formed into large, flat cakes by the process of extraction, is shipped to Hamburg for cattle-feeding.

We took a glance at the interior of the chapel, with its draped altar, cheap pictures of the saints, and a few devout worshippers kneeling humbly on the bare floor near the entrance, and were then escorted to the hospital.

"How would one of you Northern nurses like to take a case here?" said Dr. Brodrick to me as we entered the little whitewashed *adobe* building, consisting of two wards of three beds each and an operating-room.

As only extreme cases are brought to the hospital, there was but one patient in each ward—a very emaciated woman with a bad case of dysentery in the female ward, and in the adjoining room a man with a gunshot wound in his back and a bullet in his lung. An aseptic dressing had been placed over the wound and conservative treatment adopted (*viz.*, no probing), as advocated by Dr. Senn. It was now the fifth day, hemorrhage from the lung had ceased, and there was no fever, so that the patient had a fair chance to recover, which he eventually did.

Everything was clean and neat, in striking contrast to the homes of the patients. The little operating-room was very meagrely furnished, having the barest necessities for surgical work, yet here operations could be performed with a much greater degree of asepsis than in the home. In the wards the beds were low cots, the floor was of uncovered brick; to me the heat seemed intense, and flies swarmed over the netting which protected the patients' faces; no baths were ever given, as the two attendants were not intelligent enough to obey any but the simplest instructions. They could not tell the time of day by a watch or clock, so that when the medicine was to be given every two or three hours the doctor would say in Spanish, "*Cada ratita*" ("Repeat at short intervals"); if every four or five hours, the instructions were, "*Tres o cuatro veces al dia*" ("Three or four times a day").

Yet, although the nursing was scant and rather unintelligent, it must have been a blessing to those poor sick ones to be brought from their own dirty homes, where a piece of matting on the earthen floor with a *serape* (blanket) to cover them formed their only pallet, to the clean, quiet wards of this little hospital.

In the mill four men were pointed out to us who had been badly injured by an explosion, one having had at least two-thirds of his body burned and scalded (much less than that generally proving fatal), but they had all recovered, which speaks well for American medical skill backed by a Mexican constitution.

In the late afternoon a little procession of native women and children met us headed by three musicians playing a weird, plaintive air. Borne aloft on a white-draped table was the corpse of a little child. The little form was carefully dressed in white and garlanded with flowers, and a little, blue-painted coffin was carried in the rear. They call it "*un angelito*;" and it is an episode which occurs frequently among the peon class, whence so many "little angels" take their flight.

We visited the public market-place, where fruits and vegetables are exhibited, spread out in symmetrically arranged little heaps on a piece of cloth or paper on the ground, and where the vendor lives behind his stall.

Many of the booths are formed by awnings of coarse white cotton stretched overhead, screening the perishable articles from the too ardent rays of a tropic sun, and, when grouped together, producing a very picturesque effect. We purchased a fine, ripe watermelon, and when the moon rose sat out on the balcony of the doctor's house and enjoyed it.

Can I ever forget the beauty and charm of that evening, when the southern moon,

" Like a spirit glorified,
Filled and overflowed the night
With revelations of her light"?

The great square fronting the *Casa Grande* was flooded with the mellow glow, and it touched the picturesque clumps of alamo-trees and the dark line of mountains in the distance, while around us lay "a silence that could be felt," broken occasionally by the strains of some sweet Mexican air from the peon quarter or the harsh "Ye-haw" of a corralled burro.

We were silent, talked, and were silent again, feeling our Northern hearts touched by the charm of this Southern land and its silent, soft-tongued, *serape*-clothed people.

Sometime the Anglo-Saxon language will be spoken throughout their land, and they will be educated and civilized, and no doubt *bettered*, by influences from the North. The tide of civilization is sweeping that way now, and in its van, with skilful hand and gentle, sympathetic touch, march the doctor and his aide-de-camp, the trained nurse.

The night wore on; we watched the shadows lengthen as the moon slipped down behind the hills, and at last, reluctantly, we tore ourselves away, to get some sleep before taking the early morning train back to Torreón.

AN EXPERIMENT IN CONTAGIOUS NURSING

By L. L. DOCK

Henry Street Nurses' Settlement, New York

THE older members of the nursing staff of the settlement in Henry Street have long been troubled by the question of contagion in the tenements. As a rule, contagious diseases are strictly banned by all district-nursing associations. Those having printed rules usually state that the nurses will not be sent to contagious cases. We, having no printed rules, and only such as are made by common assent, have always been rather more flexible in the matter of attending contagions than any other district nursing association that I know of, and have occasionally taken up some special case when the call was urgent.

The conditions of excessive crowding in our neighborhood make complete isolation of contagious cases so absolutely impossible that it often seemed more reprehensible to refuse some serious case than to disregard the principles of technique which, important as they are, are in practice almost grotesquely remote from the life about us. As we do not take obstetrical cases at all, it was usually possible to make some emergency arrangement.

In February last it so happened that one nurse's services could be given entirely to this class of cases, and we decided to make an experiment which we hoped might be a demonstration and, perhaps, lead to some thorough-going system of oversight for these cases, Miss Hitchcock and I having visions of the free dispensaries establishing a nursing service for contagions, but Miss Wald already discerning the possibility of municipal oversight through an extension of the functions of the Department of Health.

During past administrations, when bad politics ruled, the contagious hospitals of the city were dreadfully neglected—more so even